THE BANKER'S CRIME;

—OR—

Diamond Cut Diamond.

BY NATHAN D. URNER.

CHAPTER V.

THE BROTHER OF ADELE.

MR. GILBERT Marlowe, banker, was a stern, uncompromising Mammonite, of the self-panoplied, close-helmeted, adamantine sort.

Nevertheless, he did not scorn to chuckle inwardly over what he considered a particularly neat stroke of business.

That he so regarded his dismissal of old Alworth from his eighteen years' faithful, ill-paid employment was manifest. The heart-broken old man had no sooner left the banker alone in his office than the latter rubbed his hands exultingly, and evinced his self-satisfaction by a number of half-audible expressions, as he continued to pace to and fro.

"A good riddance!" he chuckled. "By Jove! the old fellow's presence has been a sort of constant reproach, not to say possible menace, to me for years—a sort of death's head at my golden banquet, as it were—and now I shall be rid of him for good. I begin to breathe freer already. Wonder if he'll act up to that hint I gave him about his daughter and old Croak. He's a fool if he doesn't. Now to examine the old fellow's accounts!" And, passing into a middle compartment, he drew out the heavy books, opened, and began to examine them, while muttering to himself.

A few moments later, however, there was the sound of a door being opened and shut, followed by steps in the narrow passage at the side of the windowed and paneled partition, and then a smart rap on the rear-office door.

"There they are!" thought the banker, cheerfully responding to the summons; but, as he opened the door, Mr. Boncourt alone entered.

"Glad to see you, Boncourt," said Mr. Marlowe, shaking hands, and signing the newcomer to a seat at a large, round, paper-littered center table, that stood opposite to the vault. "Where's Adele?"

"She's in the garden with Noel," said Mr. Boncourt, removing a glossy silk hat, seating himself with an easy, assured air, and slowly peeling from his white, womanish hands the elegant kid gloves, without which he never walked abroad. "I told them we would summon them when everything was in readiness, Mr. Marlowe."

Unlike his sister, he spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but his features bore a strong family resemblance to hers, though cast in a heavier, stronger mold. This is tantamount to saying that he was handsome, the only other difference being that his complexion, unlike hers, was the reverse of fair. But his face was absolutely impenetrable, and he had eyes, a mustache, and short, curling hair that were as black as night.

His dress was so faultless as to suggest the handiwork of an American tailor, and the impression was somehow afforded that the slender, flexible proportions, so admirably clothed, might possess on occasion unexpected strength and activity. In years, he might have been anywhere between forty-five and fifty-five.

Mr. Marlowe looked a little surprised. "Why, everything is in readiness," said he. "I can send a servant to Croak's office and have him here in a jiffy."

"But it's necessary that I should interview you first, as the Americans say," said Mr. Boncourt, placidly. "It refers to the amount of the settlements, you know."

Mr. Marlowe looked annoyed.

"This was agreed upon between us," said he, with some stiffness.

"True."

"And I was to settle ten thousand pounds on my son; while you, in consideration of the marriage affording you an entrance into my son's social sphere—were to settle twice as much on your sister."

Mr. Boncourt laughed amusedly.

"Exactly," said he. "How well you state the case!"

"Thanks! Well, what now?"

"Peste! it's a mere trifle. I simply find that I have been out in my calculations. I can, in fact, only settle half that amount on Adele, which will be ten thousand."

"I won't listen to it!" exclaimed Mr. Marlowe, his whole manner hardening. "Sir, this is a breach of agreement—not to say a breach of faith! such a reduction—a full moiety! I won't entertain it for an instant!"

"Yes, you will."

The tone was lazy, but assured. Mr. Marlowe hesitated in a still angrier reply. Still he was not afraid.

"I tell you, I will not, sir!" he continued. "What! was not the difference in the settlements more than made up in the advantages held out to you? My son, just of age, is finely educated, well connected, numbering among his intimates Sir Harry Wilding, Lord Squanderall and other noblemen. Your sister, a widow, much older than he, and, in spite of her beauty, with no one knows what antecedents. And yourself——"

Boncourt interrupted him with another good-natured laugh, accompanied, however, by a sign to silence.

"And myself—suppose you let me speak for myself, Marlowe," said he, lightly. "I can improve on your style, excellent as it is—in its way. For myself, then—with no connections whatever; a Frenchman by birth, but cosmopolite by choice; a gambler—blackleg, you would call it in this accursed country—almost from my boyhood; and a determined aspirant—for a gambler's reasons—to those very associations which my sister's marriage to your son will procure for me. So much for myself. What of it? It has been no secret to you from the very first. I have been perfectly frank with you. I will be still franker, and avow that my heretofore frankness was dictated solely by policy. From the first you understood my scheme, why did you take it up?"

Mr. Marlowe hemmed and hawed without making a reply.

"Come; your motives for taking up my scheme, while knowing my character?" Mr. Boncourt went on, pleasantly. "I will tell you. You merely thought of the twenty thousand pounds I promised as my sister's dowry. It was a mercenary understanding between us; nothing more nor less."

Red in the face, Mr. Marlowe was about to interrupt, when he was motioned to silence.

"A moment more," continued Mr. Boncourt. "You have alluded to my sister's name in a manner approximating invidiousness. You placed yourself in personal peril when you did so."

"Sir, sir!"

"Be quiet. Of all the world, Mr. Marlowe, my sister is the sole creature I value so much as a heart-beat. The slightest slur upon her womanly name would at once challenge my resentment. Your son must marry Adele, not merely because he has successfully wooed her, but chiefly because she has come to love him. A severance would cause her distress; Adele must not be distressed.

"Wait yet a moment," he went on, again hindering an attempted interruption. "Adele's past has not been sunny, but I can afford to speak of it as frankly as of my own. There's nothing like being sure of one's ground beforehand. You have spoken of her age. That is nothing. She is perhaps ten years your son's senior, but she will pass anywhere for twenty-three, and she is in the flower of her superb beauty. You have mentioned her widowhood. But she is not a widow. She is a divorced wife. You start—you Englishmen have strait-laced prejudices on this score. Where is the difference? In this instance, at least, it shall avail nothing as an objection. Over seventeen years ago we were in California. Do you associate the date with anything peculiar in your own family history? You gave a singular start. But no matter. While there Adele, though a mere girl in years, escaped from my guidance long enough to get married. Ronceville wasn't the fellow's name, either. He was a fellow-countryman of yours, and of good birth. I wouldn't have minded his being a gambler, though he was a cheap, poor one, by no means ornamental to the profession; but he was also a drunkard and a brute. In a few months I took her away from him and kicked him into the street. America is a convenient country for getting rid of bad husbands and worthless wives. She obtained a divorce, but not before her child was born. Three years later, in San Francisco, her little boy was lost in the streets. He has never since been found. That is all of Adele's troubles I need touch upon. I have told you this much for a purpose. I would show you that when your callow son marries Adele he does not marry a foolish girl, but a woman of the world, who, in spite of her beauty, her freshness and her apparent youth, has thought, struggled and suffered profoundly—also a proud, noble and ambitious woman, who can and will make a man of him. There you are!"

Mr. Marlowe drew a long breath. Stupefaction was his first sensation; to this had succeeded a sort of wondering admiration for the sublime assurance that had prompted the remarkable avowals he had listened to; and after that he grew sullen and enraged.

"So," he cried; "and, with this additional knowledge, you have the unconscionable brass to ask me for an abatement by one-half of what you promised to settle on your sister?"

"To be sure, Marlowe; I bet on the wrong jockey at yesterday's handicap, to my sorrow. Ten thousand is all I can go, even on Adele."

"I tell you, sir, by heaven! I will not listen to it. Indeed, after what you have said, I would not have the match go on in any event. It would stain the Marlowe name!"

"It is stained already, in your person—stained beyond cleansing, did the world but know it! Come to terms! You are in my power!"

The words were still devoid of harshness, but they came out as keen and steely as a rapier gliding from a velvet scabbard.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Marlowe.

"You had a cousin—a certain Jasper Marlowe?"

"Y-e-s; he is dead."

"But think; was he dead, say, seventeen years and a half ago?"

"N-n-n-o; I hardly suppose that he was."

"Certainly not. At about that time I made his acquaintance. He was fond of horse-racing; so was I; he fell ill of a malignant fever; in fact, imagined his death approaching. I had done him a signal service; in return, he took me into his confidence. He mentioned—indeed, exhibited to me—a certain remarkable paper bearing your signature. How do you know that it is not now in my possession?"

"Heavens and earth!" gasped the banker, falling back in his chair, with an ashen face.

"Come," said Mr. Boncourt, airily rising, and resuming his hat, gloves and cane. "Really, my dear Marlowe, we should not keep Adele and Noel waiting in this way."

CHAPTER VI.

A GARDEN PARTY.

Mr. Croak came in through the garden at the same moment that Mr. Marlowe and Mr. Boncourt were issuing from the street door, for the purpose of seeking the affianced lovers.

Thus all three proceeded to the summer-house together, and this led to the meeting, already described, in which Gwendoline Alworth had so markedly attracted the angry notice of Mr. Marlowe, and from which she had so precipitately made her escape.

"What brought that girl here?" said Mr. Marlowe, roughly: for he had not wholly recovered the equanimity so recently disturbed.

Both Adele and Noel had noticed his unmannerliness toward Gwendoline, and Noel, especially, with secret mortification.

"Can you refer to Miss Alworth, father?" said he. "I presume she was simply consulting her pleasure in being here; we were by no means averse to her company."

"On the contrary," said Adele, "I, at least, found her charming. Miss Alworth seems to be as amiable as she is pretty."

Mr. Marlowe saw that ill-temper was out of order, and he had a veritable weathercock's knack of conforming to a change of wind.

"I merely feared she might have interrupted something interesting," said he, with a smile. "But come; our business in the office can be expedited, and after that we shall have tea."

"Why not have it out here in the garden?" suggested Noel. "There's a long table yonder, under the grapevine arbor, which only needs to be covered and laid."

"The very thing," said Bencourt.

Adele clasped her fan delightedly, with both hands.

"It will be so agreeable," said she. "Alphonse and I often take tea in the open air at Jasmine Lodge."

"As you choose, then," said Mr. Marlowe, as Adele arose, and took Noel's arm, "The business in the office won't take more than half an hour. You can apprise Miss Winford of your plans for supper, as we pass through the hall. By the way, what can have become of Croak?"

The lawyer had mysteriously taken his departure.

"He may have swallowed himself," observed Boncourt, recalling the lawyer's chief facial exaggeration.

"Our contemplated business, without him, would be like Hamlet, minus the Dane," said Noel.

But at this moment, the lawyer, the cause of whose disappearance will doubtless be recalled by the reader, came in view, down one of the shadier walks.

"The deuce, Croak! a little more, and you would actually have made us wait," said Marlowe, peevishly.

"A French monarch got off that before you were born," said Croak. "Business is your sphere, Marlowe; stick to it."

"But where have you been?"

"I've been endeavoring," replied Croak, in a grave, matter-of-fact way, "to make love to Miss Alworth."

Adele and Noel burst out laughing, but the banker only smiled thoughtfully, while Boncourt turned his measuring look on the misshapen lawyer, with renewed interest.

The business of drawing up the settlement papers, and signing and attesting them, took a little longer than the banker had predicted. Neither Adele nor Noel paid much attention to their contents, but occupied most of the time with chatting agreeably, while the young man explained the uses of the articles of office furniture to her, especially exhibiting the great fire-proof money vault, inside and out, with a good deal of pride.

"Why, it's roomy enough for a dungeon in there!" said Adele, when they had come out of the vault, and were standing, apart from the rest, in the narrow passage on which it opened. "Why are the great iron doors hidden away in this cramped place, instead of opening right out on the office? I suppose these rear windows separate us from the conservatory. One might peer through them, and know of all the treasure that was being stored away."

"But the window-panes, you see, are thickly coated over with paint," said Noel. "As for the iron doors opening in this way, I can't tell you of the original object. The vault was built long before I was born."

The lawyer alone, in drawing up the forms in accordance with certain amended memoranda handed him by Mr. Marlowe, seemed to remark the dimunition of the amount settled upon the lady; he had known of the original intention, and, moreover, the change was apparent enough in the banker's rough notes, where the written number "ten" had been rather freshly substituted for "twenty" as a prefix to the "thousand." But even he made no verbal comment. He merely looked oddly, first at the banker, who seduously avoided his scrutiny, and then at Boncourt, who returned the stare with lazy indifference; and then went on with his writing, with an air of total unconcern.

The papers were at last executed, and the business at an end.

"Did you tell Miss Winford about the tea?" Mr. Marlowe asked of Noel, as the party were quitting the office.

"Yes. She promised to have it ready by half-past five, and it is now nearly six. But here is Miss Winford."

They were all standing at the entrance of the rear passage, leading through the conservatory. As he spoke, and as the rest of the party turned in that direction, the housekeeper was seen standing there. She might almost have stepped out from in among the plants and flower-pots that were crowded directly behind the painted-over panes of the rear office-window, had a hiding-place been afforded by them, which, however, did not seem possible.

"I chanced to overhear Mr. Noel's last words," said Miss Winford, with a slight courtesy. "Supper will be found awaiting you in the grape-vine arbor."

"What a shocking disfigurement your housekeeper has undergone!" whispered Adele to her lover, as the party were passing into the garden.

"Yes, poor, dear woman!" replied Noel. "But I can remember her only as from my earliest recollections, and therefore only think of her goodness."

At this juncture, a second mysterious disappearance of the lawyer was noted. But even Mr. Marlowe only remarked, this time, that, if Croak did not turn up before the table was cleared, he should go home hungery.

They found the table laid in the arbor, and more substantially provided for than had been looked for.

The coachman, and a green grocer's small boy, both freshly white-aproned for the occasion, were in attendance. There was a more varied and generous accompaniment of wines than had often accorded with the banker's ideas of hospitality. A soft sea wind was cooling the air, after the heat of the day, and the repast was soon agreeably under way.

When the dishes were being removed, and fresh wines, with cigars for the gentlemen, brought on, Noel remembered something of interest in the country newspaper that he wished to read to Adele and Boncourt.

"I must have mislaid it," said he, after a vain search of his pockets. "Ah, now I remember having laid it on the table in the office. I will run and get it."

"Never mind, at present," said Adele, detaining him, by a playful gesture of her fan. "It is growing too dark for you to read, without straining your handsome eyes. See: the fire-flies are beginning to twinkle in the gloom. I want some, *mon ami*."

"Some what?" said Noel, with a puzzled look.

"Some fire-flies, to be sure; some fire-flies, and flowers, too! quick! catch and cull them for me!"

He saw that she was in earnest, so, like the dutiful lover that he was, he laughingly arose and was soon chasing through the garden, hat in hand, in pursuit of the fire-flies.

He was presently, however, willing enough to delegate this interesting pastime to the servants, whose nimble efforts proved much more successful than his own, and to turn his own attention to the flower-gathering, exclusively.

In a little while Adele had lying on the table before her a heap of pretty blooms, together with a large number of the captured fire-flies, which she further secured from instinctive rambling by imprisoning under an inverted wine-glass, after which she gravely proceeded to make use of her acquisitions in a very novel way.

"Is there no other fairy-like caprice that I can gratify?" cried Noel, laughing. "Shall I not order the walks to be strewn with table-salt, for sleigh-riding, as was done for the Pompadour, or some other favorite, in the royal gardens?"

"It is hardly necessary, till I have exhausted this one," she replied, smiling.

Meanwhile her delicate fingers were busy with the flowers and the fire-flies, together with numerous slender grass-spears, which, after moistening or gumming with sweetened wine, she utilized in some deft but mysterious way in binding insects and blooms together in fantastic forms, and by which the fire-flies were caused to emit their phosphorescent pulsations much more brightly and incessantly than if left to their natural instincts.

At last she crowned her fair head with a wonderful chaplet of intermingling flowers and insects, the latter glittering like veritable gems of fire, and lighting up the soft blooms that surrounded them with a clear and starry luster.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Noel, in unaffected admiration, while even the banker grew interested, and Boncourt looked on with lazy complacency. "Was there ever anything so beautiful? You look like a princess of elfland!"

She laughed, and then encircled her throat with a necklace that was in keeping with the wreath, after which she also added flower and fire-fly bracelets to her wrists, and a brooch, or bouquet of the same odd and striking formation, to her breast; the whole effect being rich and novel in a high degree.

"It is like an enchantment—a tropical dream!" cried her lover. "Could anything be at the same time so lovely and so outlandish? From what odorous and houri-haunted region did you snatch this accomplishment, Adele?"

"From both Mexico and Brazil," she replied, smiling.

Then, resting her elbow on the table, the loose, lace-frothed sleeve of soft lawn floating back and down, to the apparently unconscious revelation of the gleaming, perfectly-modeled arm, she began fanning herself gently, in a manner that caused the twinkling little golden disks at wrist, throat, breast, and crown to flash and flutter with redoubled brilliancy.

"Ah, but Brazil was the true paradise for such displays!" she went on, musingly. "The fire-fly is much larger and more dazzling there—indeed, a regular species of beetle, I think. The ladies, in garden parties, even fasten them to their necks and shoulders with tiny golden chains, and thus they wander in and out of the folds of lace, with tracks of fire until, at times, one's whole person will seem to burn with them."

At this moment they heard a ring at the gate, which had been locked, as was the custom at about that hour.

One of the servants brought word that a gentleman wished very much to see Mr. Boncourt, if he could do so without inconvenience.

"Did he give his name?" said Boncourt, without disturbing himself.

"Yes, sir; Captain Rollingstone."

Neither the banker nor Noel could remember to have heard the name before; while Adele suddenly threw her novel ornaments away, and looked annoyed.

"Oh, Rollingstone, indeed?" said Boncourt, studiously abstaining from looking at his sister. "An acquaintance of mine, Mr. Marlowe. Would you object to his joining us here? He must be just up from London, and both thirsty and hanged up."

Mr. Marlowe had no objection to any friend of Boncourt's, though he himself would presently be obliged to desert the party. So Captain Rollingstone joined the party, was duly introduced, and seated.

He was a placid, carelessly dressed man, the traces of whose original good looks, that might at one time have been considerable, had been almost wholly disfigured by the apparent inroads of long, persistent and hard dissipation.

Adele had probably met him before, and her only recognition now was a freezing, scarcely perceptible nod, after which she at once turned and engaged in conversation with her lover, as though unconscious of the new-comer's presence.

The latter, however, with the most perfect indifference to her action, settled himself wearily behind a bottle of wine and, after addressing a few commonplaces to the banker, began to talk exclusively to Boncourt about certain racing events, past and prospective, while frequently helping himself to the wine with an eager and trembling hand.

Boncourt seemed to take a sort of insolent and negative interest in the new-comer, but Mr. Marlowe soon looked bored.

The banker, indeed, presently asked to be excused, on the plea of having letters to write, and left the table, after promising to return before they could think of departing.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. MARLOWE'S DILEMMA.

While ostensibly busying himself over Mr. Alworth's accounts in the office, Mr. Marlowe was continually brooding over his private interview with Boncourt, and the mortification and apprehension it had caused him.

"To think of my being in the power of this velvety, self-poisoned, veteran scoundrel, such as his own avowals make him out to be!" he ground out between his teeth. "It is maddening! But softly; am I really in his power? If so, why didn't he refuse to make any settlement whatever on Adele? He can't really have that document—the sign manual of my idiocy and ruin—in his possession, or he would assuredly have pushed me to the wall."

He was timidly interrupted by his housekeeper, who wanted to know if the cook and housemaid might go out visiting, or would be required at home by the presence of the guests.

"Yes, yes; let them go, ma'am; and pray don't disturb me again," said the master. "Do you lock up the house, and go to bed. I will see to bidding the guests good-night, besides admitting the servants when they return."

Miss Winford thanked him, and he was once more left alone.

He was seated on Mr. Alworth's high stool, with the account books spread out before him, but still found it difficult to take his mind off Boncourt and his implied threats.

At last he struck the books impatiently with his clenched hand, and wheeled in his seat.

"What a stark, staring, driveling idiot I was to give in to that fellow so soon!" he went on muttering. "Why, even if he has the paper, I might safely defy him! With my reputation opposed to his, could I not whistle him down the wind, and even save poor Noel from this divorced woman, with the caprices of a Spaniard and the manners of an odalisque? Faugh! I will break with them both to-morrow. Croak will help me out. Still, if I only knew whether he had that paper or not!"

He turned again to the books, and was really beginning to forget the exasperating issue, when, just as the office clock was striking nine, he was aroused by a sound of the street door being opened and shut, as though with an uncommon degree of caution.

"Why, I heard Miss Winford put down the night-latch," thought he, rising and passing through the railing-gate into the rear division. "Tush! it must be Noel coming back to look for the newspaper he spoke of. No one else in the garden is provided with a night-key."

He was about to return to his interrupted employment, but suddenly paused again. The steps that were passing through the hall did not resemble Noel's.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

What the Groundhog Is.

An inspection of the natural history book show that the groundhog is a genus of the squirrel order. It is from sixteen to twenty inches long, without counting four inches of tail. The body is brownish gray above and reddish-brown below, and the feet and tail are a blackish brown. The animal is fond of sitting erect, as a squirrel does, and it assumes that attitude when eating, holding its food in its paws. It cleans and combs its fur like a squirrel, licking and smoothing it down as a cat does. Most of the day, when not hibernating, it sleeps in its burrow, occasionally coming out and taking a look around. In the evening it goes out to feed upon grass, as well as fruits and vegetables, to which it often does much damage. In the daytime it never goes far from its burrow. When angry or alarmed it makes a gurgling or chattering noise with its mouth and sometimes it utters a shrill whistle, which has given it the name among the French Canadians of the "sifflcur" or whistler. The bite of the groundhog is severe and it will make a desperate fight against a dog. Its hide is tough and was formerly used for whip lashes. The fur is of no value and the flesh is flabby and rank, though the latter, when cooked like roast pig, can be eaten by a person who has a first-rate appetite.

The groundhog, or "woodchuck," as it is more commonly called in the north, becomes torpid during the latter part of October in Maryland. Unlike the other varieties of marmot, it is not gregarious in its habits, each family keeping to itself. It burrows on the slope of a hill or by the side of a big stone, making an excavation twenty or thirty feet long, which descends obliquely four or five feet, then gradually rising to a large round chamber, where the groundhog family sleeps and brings up its young. The little ones are born three to eight at a time. New England farmers make a practice of drowning groundhogs out with water. One story was found of a woodchuck that was kept tame in a kitchen, making its bed in a box full of straw in a warm corner. Nevertheless, when the cold season arrived it curled itself up with its little nose in its stomach and thus composed itself for a winter's sleep. Some weeks later it was put on the floor by the fire and gradually thawed out, but, when put back in its box, it went asleep again for six weeks more. The burrows of the groundhog are always so constructed that no water can flood them.—*Washington Star.*

THERE is no sweeter repose than that which is purchased by labor.

A FAMOUS HOUSE.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE DISCOVERER OF AMERICA

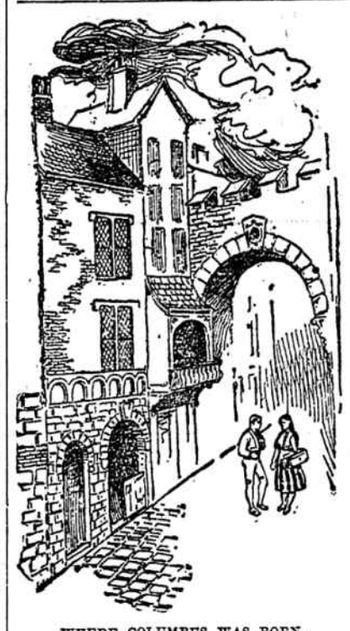
A Visit to the Old Homestead in Genoa in Which Columbus First Saw the Light of Day—Born in Poverty

In the various biographies of Christopher Columbus to the little town of Cogoleto, sixteen miles from Genoa, has generally been credited the honor of being his birthplace. Until very recently, says a letter from Genoa to the Chicago *Post*, a humble mansion in the outskirts of this village has been regarded as the domicile which first sheltered the

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

world's greatest discoverer. In a rear room of this antiquated structure the young navigator, as he gazed from the windows upon the blue waters of the Mediterranean, is commonly supposed to have first conceived his ideas of securing a nearer passage to the Indies and to have drafted his first charts for the expedition. But, alas for the reputation of historians and biographers, these statements so long accepted as the truth must now be discarded. Not Cogoleto but Genoa is the birthplace of Columbus. He was born in a stuccoed old house situated on a narrow, dirty street and known as 37 Via del Pontecello.

It is a very thickly settled portion of the city, that in which the famous dwelling stands, and poverty—gaunt and haggard poverty—is seen on every hand. The house is five and a half



WHERE COLUMBUS WAS BORN.

stories high and is closely wedged in between those of a similar kind. Almost in front of it a huge arch, built centuries before Columbus's birth, spans the street. At present the house is unoccupied and the first story is boarded up in front, giving it anything but an attractive appearance. Two stories have been added to it since it was occupied by Domenico Columbus, the father of Christopher, and numerous other alterations have been made, but, fortunately, there has been preserved by the municipality an exact draught of the old house, and by searching among the the musty old records of the fifteenth century this may be seen by the traveler in the Genoa, and it will indeed be surprising if

PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS. (FROM A RARE PAINTING.)

among these papers are not yet to be found many documents that will throw new light upon the early life and surroundings of Columbus.

The American Consul, Mr. Fletcher, kindly accompanied me to the old site, and I shall never forget the moment when I stood with him at the front of the building and read this inscription which is engraved there on a stone tablet:

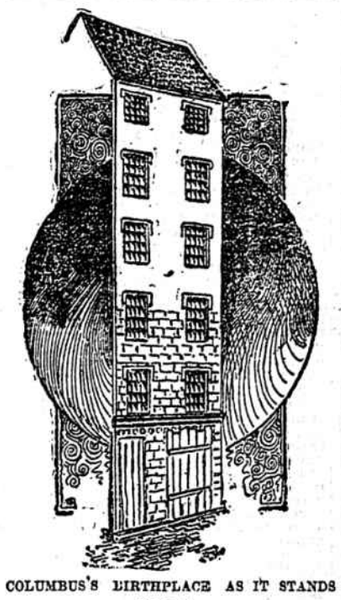
Nulla domus titulo dignior.
Heic paternis in ædibus
Christoforus Columbus pueritiam
Primanque juventutem transegit.

which translated is: No house more worthy of a record. In these paternal walls did Christopher Columbus pass his boyhood and early youth.

A book has been published by Marcello Staglieno giving an exact reproduction of the records relating to the home of Columbus, and also containing a cut of the old building. But 100 copies were published. Mr. Fletcher, by considerable pains and research, was fortunate enough to procure two copies, one of which he sent to the State Department at Washington, and the other, which he has in his possession, he kindly gave me to look at. This book fully establishes the site of Columbus's birthplace.

The father of Columbus was a cheese vender and lived with his family over his place of business. In these close and unwholesome surroundings it is indeed a wonder that Christopher, a delicate boy, grew to vigorous manhood. And associated with the ignorant people among whom his lot was cast, it is also remarkable that he should have aspired to anything more than the life of a vender. Yet from the ranks of the poor, squalid and ignorant have many of our greatest men sprung. The divine spark of genius is as likely to kindle a flame in the hut of the lowly as in the palace of the King.

Mr. Fletcher has been flooded with letters from America, mostly from Chicago, making inquiries concerning Columbus. Some enterprising speculators of the Garden City have tried to buy the old homestead, probably with the intention of exhibiting it during the World's Fair; but they are too late. What a few months ago could have been bought for $10,000 has since been sold to the municipality and could not now be had for a million. The city of Genoa drove a very sharp bargain with the unsophisticated owner and got the place for almost nothing.



COLUMBUS'S BIRTHPLACE AS IT STANDS TO-DAY.

Among other objects here relating to Columbus is the very fine statue of him near the depot. The pedestal is adorned with ship prows, and at the foot of the statue, which rests on an anchor, is the kneeling figure of America. It is surrounded by allegorical figures representing geography, science, religion, strength and wisdom, and between them are reliefs from the life of Columbus with inscriptions.

Perhaps the most interesting of the smaller relics of the great navigator are some original letters written by him to the Genoa Bank of St. George offering to give to the bank one-tenth of his revenue from property secured by discovery in the new world in trust for the purpose of reducing the tax on corn and wine to relieve the poor of his native city. The letters are kept under lock and key in the marble pedestal of his bust at the palace, and only the copies are on exhibition. To see the originals a special permission must be obtained from the Mayor.

Tree-Trunk Music.

The natives of the New Hebrides, who are still addicted to the practice of anthropophagy, afford one of the most curious subjects of contemporaneous study to be made upon primitive and savage populations. Nothing is more

THE TREE-TRUNK MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

curious than their musical instruments. The accompanying sketch gives a good idea of them.

They consist of hollow tree-trunks containing apertures connected by a vertical slit. These trunks are ornamented at the upper part with sculptures representing heads, feet, war clubs and ships. By striking each of them with a stick, the natives produce somewhat cadenced sounds resembling those of the tomtom. They perform their dances to the sound of these instruments, after having daubed their faces red and black.

They have also three other musical instruments; a sort of trumpet made of a shell perforated at the side or extremity; a syrinx with six, seven or eight pipes, from which they sometimes obtain harmonious sounds; and a long flute perforated at the lower extremity and consisting of a single piece of bamboo with three holes and a mouthpiece. These instruments are used only within doors in order to amuse children.

Cleaned Out.

"Lily, did you polish Polly's cage and clean him out, as I told you?"

Lily—"Yis, Sor-r; an' I know he's clean out of his cage, for I saw him fly out o' the window!"—*Judge.*

Mrs. Bradley Martin, of New York City, who is the owner of some of the finest jewels among collections made by millionaires, has lately added to her stock something of rare value and historical interest. It is nothing less than a crown which belonged to the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, a velvet cap, with the insignia of royalty emblazoned in precious stones.

Thirty-three steamboats navigate the Congo River.

WILD VIOLETS.

They smell of the rain, the sun and breeze;
Of the long, cool shadows of cedar trees;
Of the brook that sinks down its mossy ledge;
Of the bending ferns and the rustling sedges;
Of velvet mosses that keep the dew;
And of sweet dead leaves that sweet last year knew.

They smell of the chill pure breath of dawn;
Of wind-swept hillside and sun-swept lawn;
Of rose-briar hedge and of winding lane;
And—of dreams that will never come back again,
These wild, pale violets, faint and sweet,
That we buy in the crowded city street.

—*Madeline S. Bridges, in Puck.*

PITH AND POINT.

A grave situation—A cemetery site.

Measurses not men—The ladies' tailor.

Money is the life preserver that keeps people up in the swim.

A prison warden should not be judged by the company he keeps.—*Boston Courier.*

This is the season of the year when potted plants want the earth.—*Washington Star.*

The gas meter toils not, but as a spinner it is a splendid success.—*Pittsburg Dispatch.*

While the girl of the period is shining in the parlor, her mother is shining in the kitchen.

A man may be positive in his negative, and so may a woman for that matter.—*Pittsburg Post.*

A man's experience is either something he has or something that has him.—*Savannah News.*

Whales are not naturally belligerent animals, but they will come to blows once in a while.—*St. Joseph News.*

The Italian organist comes monkeying around the premises with the return of warm weather.—*Boston Transcript.*

A ton of diamonds at the present day is worth $35,000,000. We furnish the information to prevent the public from being overcharged.—*Monroe City News.*

The sexton helped his worthy wife,
He peeled potatoes well;
He next peeled off his overcoat,
And then he pealed the bell.
—*Washington Post.*

He (catching at a straw)—"So you do think it is at least possible that I could make you happy?" She—"Yes—if I were going to marry for spite, you know."—*Life.*

"To what do you attribute your longevity?" asked an investigator of a centenarian. "To the fact that I never died," was the conclusive reply.—*Harper's Bazar.*

Sergeant—"When you put the gun to your shoulder to shoot, you must stand so still that a guide-post beside you would look like a drunken civilian."—*Fliegeende Blaetter.*

When you see a man dart suddenly across the street in New York City, now, you are not certain whether he has seen a creditor coming his way or there is a live wire down.—*Statesman.*

He talked the old man dumb and blind,
Then muchly to his grief
The old man said—'twas most unkind—
"Go on, I'm not yet deaf."
—*The Epoch.*

Banks—"I never have been able to ascertain why it was that the number of suicides increased fifty-nine per cent. in the year 1716." Ranks—"Why, it was in that year that the first piano was invented."—*Life.*

"Did my poem go in?"
He did timidly ask it;
And, oh, 'twas a sin,
That vile editor's grin.
As he said: "Yes, it's in—
The waste-basket."
—*Brooklyn Life.*

"Brethren," remarked the pastor, as the contribution box started around, "will you be kind enough to put a needle and thread in, so I may be the better able to utilize the buttons you so lavishly contribute?"—*Washington Star.*

The Future Cashier: Teacher—"But, Hans, what are you doing with your shoes and stockings off?" "The book wants to know how, many four times five is, and I haven't got enough fingers, so I have to count my toes."—*Fliegende Blaetter.*

Gimlet—"The old man said last night that I was the worst clerk he ever had, and if I came around again he'd have the porter fire me." Auger—"Well, what did you do?" Gimlet—"Do? What would any gentleman do? I handed in my resignation."—*New York Recorder.*

He (after marriage)—"What? You have no fortune? You said over and over again that you were afraid some one would marry you for your money." She—"Yes, and you said over and over again that you would be happy with me if I hadn't a cent. Well, I haven't a cent."—*New York Weekly.*

"May I have the honor to conduct your daughter to the supper table?" asked a society gentleman of a lady from the country, who is staying with some friends whom she is visiting. "May you take her to supper?" was the response. "Why, of course, and you may take me, too. That's what we came here for."—*Mercury.*

A Man-Faced Crab.

"Have I got 'em again?" exclaimed a dapper-looking chap, as he jumped back from a case in the State Mining Bureau's Museum, over which he had been standing.

"What's the matter?" asked his companion.

"Look," was the answer.

The cause of this commotion was not very large. Only a little thing, but as queer a combination as crawls. It does crawl, too, for it was nothing more nor less than a crab the young men were gazing at. But such a crab! The body was not quite an inch long, but the body was what told the tale. It bore a perfect impression of the face of a Chinese coolie; a veritable missing link, with eyes and nose and mouth all clearly defined. It seemed to jeer at one, and the impish look it sent out was quite enough to send a victim of alcoholism up a tree.

The specimen is a contribution of Arthur E. Rider, and is known as the Heike kani, or face crab. There are immense numbers of these crawling imps in the inland sea of Japan, and the Mining Bureau's specimen came from there. From out of the "chin" of the crab grow two arms on either side, while it has two legs about two inches and a half long on either side of the face, seemingly growing out of the back of the head.—*San Francisco Examiner.*